

Washington, DC -- Today, U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) urged local fire departments to apply for fiscal year 2007 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants that provide assistance to fire departments to increase the number of firefighters and first responders.

“Communities across the 24th district depend on local fire departments to keep them safe and secure,” said Arcuri, a member of the Congressional Fire Caucus. “I encourage local chiefs to apply for these critical staffing grants. It is vital that we provide local departments with the resources they need to maintain the highest level of preparedness and service. In Congress, I have joined colleagues on both sides of the aisle to request increased funding for this critical grant program.”

Arcuri’s office is notifying local departments that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is releasing grant guidance and application materials under the fiscal year (FY) 2007 SAFER Grant Program. The Department will award approximately \$110 million in SAFER grants nationwide.

The SAFER program provides funding for career and volunteer fire departments to hire new firefighters and recruit and retain volunteer fire fighters. The goal is for fire departments to increase their staffing and deployment capabilities and ultimately attain 24-hour staffing, thus assuring that their communities have adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards. The SAFER grants support two specific activities: (1) the hiring of firefighters, and (2) recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. The grants pay a portion of the salaries of newly hired firefighters over the 5-year award performance period.

The SAFER grant application period will open on Monday, July 30, 2007 and will close on Friday, August 31, 2007 at 5:00 p.m. The SAFER Guidance and application materials are available at <http://www.grants.gov/> . Local fire departments are also encouraged to call Arcuri’s district office toll-free at 1-800-235-2525 with any additional questions or concerns.

In March, Arcuri joined 100 Members of Congress in writing to the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee requesting additional funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program and SAFER program.

The House recently passed the fiscal year 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, which included a substantial increase in funding for SAFER and the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP). The bill includes \$800 million for Firefighter Assistance Grants – an increase of \$500 million over the President's request and \$138 million above the fiscal year 2007 level.

Earlier this year, Arcuri cosponsored the Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act (H.R. 943) which would provide tax assistance for volunteer emergency responders to help area fire departments retain and recruit volunteers. The 24th Congressional District is home to a number of firehouses that rely exclusively on volunteer firefighters.

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